



Invitation: Watch and Pray

Witness to the Montreal Truth and Reconciliation Commission national event

APRIL 24–27, 2013

Dear friends,

The next national event of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) takes place in Montreal from April 24 to 27. Survivors or former students of the Indian Residential Schools System run by the Canadian government and four Canadian churches will gather with their families and the wider Canadian community and tell their stories. These stories will be formally recorded by one of the TRC's three Commissioners in order to create a permanent historical record of this chapter in Canadian and church history.

KAIROS invites you to watch the testimony, pray, and take action.

KAIROS strongly encourages Canadians of all backgrounds to **attend TRC hearings and events whenever possible.** After the Québec national event, the TRC's focus will shift to British Columbia and Alberta. Please see our events listings for further information on TRC community and national events: <http://www.kairoscanada.org/kairos-events/>

For the vast majority who cannot attend in person, please take even a couple of hours to **watch the audio and video live streaming of all testimonies:** http://www.livestream.com/trc_cvr

Some people have been gathering in groups to watch testimony; others are listening individually. Either is an important gesture of respect towards the survivors and the truth they are sharing, as well as a contribution to a new relationship.

At Sunday, mid-week or special services, please **include a prayer for the survivors**, their families and communities, and for all Canadians. Consider opening your faith community's space for an informal prayer service or ceremony during any or all of the hearing dates. The ecumenical prayer Remembering the Children is printed in this resource. Consider also reading and reflecting on the apologies to Indigenous peoples offered by a number of national churches and regional church bodies.



These courageous testimonies of peoples' experience in the schools are part of a shared history that has been built on a broken relationship. The TRC's journey is one step towards a new and healed relationship based on full respect for Indigenous peoples.

Whatever your background, please join in prayer or good thoughts for the survivors, their communities and their families, the Commissioners, and all who attend the hearings.

KAIROS and our Québec partners will have a table in the display area at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montréal. If you are attending in person, please drop by for a visit! Busses from Ottawa are planned, so please contact Katy (kquinn@kairoscanada.org) if you are in the Ottawa area and interested in attending in person.

Going further

To learn more about the Indian Residential Schools System, its enormous impact on Indigenous people and communities, and how we might continue our common work towards reconciliation, truth and equity, please visit www.trc.ca and www.kairoscanada.org/tre

Consider holding a Blanket Exercise, an interactive workshop on right relationship that teaches the history many of us never learn and puts the residential school system in a bigger context. Email KAIROS to get a copy of the script and a list of other resources: orders@kairoscanada.org

Many of KAIROS' member churches and organizations also have excellent resources to help their members learn about residential schools, so please be sure to check these out.

KAIROS looks forward to our shared work on truth, reconciliation, equity and Indigenous rights throughout 2013. **Please participate in our national photo action in support of the TRC.** Your photos will be shared at national events! And join in a national action focused on the protection of water in May and June 2013.

For more information, contact Julie Graham, Education and Campaigns Coordinator-Dignity and Rights at jgraham@kairoscanada.org or 1 877 403 8933 x233.



Statement of Apology – to former students of Indian Residential Schools

Excerpt of words spoken on June 11, 2008
by Prime Minister Stephen Harper:

.... To the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all family members and communities, the Government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this.

We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions, that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this.

We now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you. Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry.

The burden of this experience has been on your shoulders for far too long. The burden is properly ours as a Government, and as a country. There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian Residential Schools system to ever prevail again. You have been working on recovering from this experience for a long time and in a very real sense, we are now joining you on this journey. The Government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly.

Nous le regrettons
We are sorry
Nimitataynan
Niminchinowesamin
Mamiattugut



Remembering the Children Prayer

God of our Ancestors,
who holds the spirits of our grandmothers and grandfathers
and the spirits of our grandchildren:

Remembering the Children,
we now pledge ourselves to speak the Truth,
and with our hearts and our souls
to act upon the Truth we have heard
of the injustices lived,
of the sufferings inflicted,
of the tears cried,
of the misguided intentions imposed,
and of the power of prejudice and racism
which were allowed to smother the sounds and laughter of
the forgotten children.

Hear our cries of lament
for what was allowed to happen, and for what will never be.

In speaking and hearing and acting upon the Truth
may we as individuals and as a nation meet the hope of a new beginning.

Great Creator God,
who desires that all creation live in harmony and peace:

Remembering the Children
we dare to dream of a Path of Reconciliation
where apology from the heart leads to healing of the heart
and the chance of restoring the circle,
where justice walks with all,
where respect leads to true partnership,
where the power to change comes from each heart.

Hear our prayer of hope,
and guide this country of Canada
on a new and different path. Amen

(<http://www.rememberingthechildren.ca/tour/documents/prayer.pdf>)



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The members of KAIROS are: the Anglican Church of Canada, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Canadian Religious Conference, Christian Reformed Church in North America (Canada Corporation), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Mennonite Central Committee Canada, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and the United Church of Canada.